

Healthy Eyes Healthy People

Children's Checklist

Because children grow and change so rapidly, how they see can have a profound impact on their development and ability to learn. As a parent, it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to accurately judge how well your child is seeing since you can't see through their eyes and symptoms of a vision problem aren't always apparent.

Here are some questions to help determine if your child might have symptoms, which might indicate a serious vision problem. Keep in mind, a comprehensive eye examination by an optometrist can most easily discover eye problems.

Do you have an infant or pre-schooler:

- ☐ *With an eye turned inward, outward, upward, or downward?*
- ☐ *With a habit of turning or tilting his head or closing an eye?*
- ☐ *Who avoids coloring, puzzles, or detailed activities?*
- ☐ *Who bumps into objects or cannot judge distances?*

Children with the tendency for an eye to turn (strabismus) will often tilt or turn their head or close an eye in an attempt to increase their comfort.



Amblyopia is one of the most common problems in young children. With amblyopia, however, there are almost never any signs that the child is having a problem unless it is related to strabismus. Amblyopia, or lazy eye, is the lack of development of vision in an eye that is healthy and has the potential to have normal vision, given the opportunity for normal development. It happens when the brain learns to see with the good eye only and the other eye grows weaker from disuse.

Amblyopia can be caused by the presence of strabismus (cross-eyes), unequal or high degree of farsightedness or nearsightedness or a physical obstruction like a cataract, a drooping lid or an eye that has been patched because of an injury. Two to four percent of American children have amblyopia.

With appropriate examinations, an optometrist can detect conditions that cause amblyopia. Early treatment has the best potential for success.

- ☐ *Does your child have encrusted eyelids or frequent styes?*

Various eye conditions such as infections, blocked tear ducts, and styes can be easily diagnosed and treated by your optometrist. Avoid more serious conditions by having any questionable eye health problems immediately examined by your optometrist.

- ☐ *When reading, does your school-age child lose his place, make frequent reversals, use his finger to maintain his place, hold material closer than normal, omit or confuse small words, or consistently perform below potential?*

Vision problems can be most evident when your child is learning to read.

Eighty percent of what students learn is through vision, and yet 86 percent of children who enter school have not had a complete eye examination.

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Children's Checklist *continued*

The most important step a parent can take to insure optimal learning – a comprehensive eye examination.

● **R**egular eye exams by a doctor of optometry can help you be certain that your child's vision is developing normally. Since vision changes can occur without you or your child noticing them, your child should visit the optometrist for a comprehensive eye examination starting at six months, again at 3 years, before starting school and at least every two years, or more frequently, if specific problems, like juvenile diabetes, or risk factors exist. If needed, the doctor can prescribe treatment including eyeglasses, contact lenses, or vision therapy.

Keep in mind, a school vision screening, while helpful, is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination. Schedule your child's eye examination with your optometrist to make the most of a good education.

Tips for parents scheduling an infant or toddler's comprehensive eye examination:

- Schedule the exam early in the day;
- Have your baby fed and dry;
- Let your older child know that there won't be any shots involved; and
- Make a game of it; practice looking at pictures and making it fun.

